

building

m o m e n t u m

a progress report for the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities **2001-2004**

“If you plant for a year, plant a seed. If for ten years, plant a tree. If for a hundred years, teach the people. When you sow a seed once, you will reap a single harvest. When you teach the people, you will reap a hundred harvests.”

– Kuan Chung

The Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities, a state agency, believes investing our resources in human capital is the best way to create and sustain positive change for people with disabilities.

Our mission is to promote public policy that leads to the independence, productivity and inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. Our vision is that Hoosier communities will be accessible, inclusive and respectful of all their members. In accomplishing this vision, we rely on carefully crafted strategic alliances between the Council, Indiana communities and people with disabilities.

A letter from the executive director

Dear fellow stakeholders:

Managing change in a world of uncertainty is challenging. It requires a willingness to do business differently by embracing more flexible, responsive and creative approaches. It demands that organizations stay close to customers, adopt a strategic plan and formulate alliances in both the private and public sectors.

The Council has long embraced this model – because it works. It creates positive changes for people with disabilities. As we do so, it is important to step back periodically and evaluate our progress. What have we accomplished? What are we working toward?

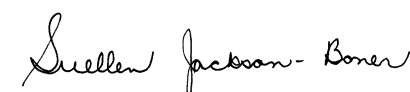
Without a doubt, Hoosiers with disabilities have experienced many positive changes since we issued our last progress report in 2000. As a state, we have made dramatic steps toward offering home and community-based care options to people with disabilities, rejecting the status quo and reducing our reliance on segregated institutional care. We have also removed some barriers for people with disabilities by passing such legislation as M.E.D. Works.

These changes could not have occurred without strategic alliances and the strong leadership of people with disabilities across the state. With the Council’s comprehensive approach, we have played an instrumental role by providing training and support, cultivating leaders within the disability community, and building relationships in both the public and private sectors.

While we concentrated our resources on promoting leadership and personal responsibility, our board also completed a restructuring process to become more effective and efficient. We have streamlined our operations, creating cost savings for taxpayers; we have also made it a priority to seek grants and other additional resources. As part of this process, the Council has reevaluated our programs, ensuring focus on the activities offering the most impact for Indiana residents.

This report outlines these and many other successes and challenges for Indiana. Our efforts – and the efforts of leaders with disabilities across the state – are changing the landscape of Indiana communities in powerful ways. Yet our work is not finished, and we will not rest until all Hoosier communities are accessible, inclusive and respectful of all their members.

Sincerely,



Suellen Jackson-Boner
Executive Director

Building momentum:

On center stage and behind the scenes, the Council is a dominant force in shaping a better future for the more than 1 million Hoosiers with disabilities.

Americans' attitudes improving

People with disabilities have always faced an invisible barrier to full community participation – the attitudes and stereotypes people hold about people with disabilities. But surveys show that Americans are beginning to understand and appreciate disability issues, particularly as the baby boomer generation begins to acquire age-related disabilities. For example, a 2003 National Organization on Disability (NOD)/Harris survey showed strong support for the Americans with Disabilities Act (see chart).

The Council's efforts to shape attitudes about disability are paying off in Indiana, too, as evidenced by the many positive changes taking place across the state. Indiana residents with disabilities are more integrated into the community than ever before, and they are working, learning, worshiping and volunteering alongside their peers without disabilities every day.

American support for the Americans with Disabilities Act

STATEMENT	PERCENT IN SUPPORT
Public places like restaurants, hotels, theaters, stores and museums may not discriminate against customers on the basis of disability.	88%
New public transportation vehicles must be made accessible to people with disabilities.	87%
Employers may not discriminate against someone who is qualified to do a job just because they have a disability.	85%
Employers with more than 15 employees must make reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities.	79%

Source: National Organization on Disability/Harris Poll, July 2003.

Changes for Hoosiers with disabilities

Employers recognize people with disabilities' strengths, skills

People with disabilities have the highest unemployment rate of any minority group in the nation. Yet, while that statistic sounds grim, people with disabilities have actually experienced a rise in employment in recent years. Today, 35 percent of people with disabilities are employed at least part-time, up from 32 percent in 2000. That means thousands more people with disabilities are earning an income independently – a strong achievement during a time of economic struggle for our state and nation. It shows that employers are recognizing the many skills and leadership abilities people with disabilities can bring to the workforce.

Initiatives address transportation concerns

For some people with disabilities, the lack of reliable, accessible transportation is the most significant barrier to employment and participation in community life. For example, a survey of people with disabilities at the Council's Annual Conference in 2002 showed that transportation was one of the top five issues of concern. The Council has helped to address these concerns through its Community Transportation Initiative (see sidebar, page 9).

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Defining moments in the Indiana disability rights movement: 2001-2004

Timeline continued

February 2001 In <i>Alabama v. Garrett</i> , the U.S. Supreme Court rules that people with disabilities who are employed by a state government entity may not sue the state for employment discrimination based on disability. The case is one in a series that limits the scope of the ADA.	March 2001 Indiana advocates launch Fifth Freedom, a statewide network of disability organizations, with support from the Council.	May 2001 Indiana passes M.E.D. Works legislation that allows people with disabilities who earn higher incomes to “buy into” the state Medicaid program, removing the need to choose between employment and health care coverage.	January 2002 The president signs into law the No Child Left Behind Act, which alters the focus of special education programs, emphasizing educational outcomes.	January 2002 In its ruling in <i>Toyota Motor Manufacturing v. Williams</i> , the Supreme Court narrows the definition of disability, making it more difficult for people with disabilities to win ADA-related lawsuits.	March 2002 The Council launches Count Us IN, a program designed to increase the political participation of Hoosiers with disabilities.	April 2002 Indiana introduces the new Medicaid Support Services Waiver, which provides home and community-based services to thousands of people with disabilities.	June 2002 The disability community mourns the death of one of its most dedicated leaders, Justin Dart, the “father of the ADA.”	October 2002 The president signs into law the Help America Vote Act of 2002, which requires that polling places be accessible and guarantees people with disabilities the right to cast a secret ballot.	February 2003 Indiana introduces the new Medicaid Waiver for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbance, which supports home and community-based care options for children with emotional disabilities.	May 2003 Gov. Frank O’Bannon signs into law Senate Bill 493, which expands home and community-based care options for people with disabilities.	October 2003 Transportation experts from across the nation convene in Indianapolis for the Council’s two-day “Accelerating Accessibility” conference, which addresses rural transportation needs for people with disabilities.	May 2004 The Supreme Court rules in <i>Tennessee v. Lane</i> that people with disabilities can sue states to remedy inaccessible judicial facilities and services. The ruling reaffirms an essential component of the ADA.	June 2004 Costa Miller, a respected and vocal advocate for people with disabilities and executive director of the Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, passes away.
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Home and community-based care options improve

During the past four years, Indiana's transition from institutional care for people with disabilities to home and community-based care has been remarkable. At the urging of people with disabilities, the Council and other disability-related organizations across the state, Indiana rejected the status quo by shifting its funding focus to home and community-based options, removing disincentives to work, introducing new waiver programs and closing several state-run institutions. Everyone benefits from such changes, which improve the lives of people with disabilities while saving Hoosier taxpayers millions of dollars.

According to the *Developmental Disabilities Services in Indiana: 2004 Progress Report*:

- Spending for home and community-based services in Indiana grew 80 percent from 2000 to 2004.

- Federal Medicaid spending for the Home and Community-based Services Waiver in Indiana increased 360 percent from 2000 to 2004, while spending for intermediate care facilities/mental retardation (ICF/MR) dropped 16 percent.
- The number of people with developmental disabilities served in home and community-based settings increased 34 percent from 2000 to 2004. At the same time, the percentage of people with disabilities living in homes with six or fewer residents increased from 44 percent of all people served in 2000 to 67 percent of all people served in 2004.

Moving forward, we can achieve even better results by providing services to the more than 10,000 Hoosier families on waiting lists to receive home and community-based services, ensuring that people with disabilities have choice and control over the services they receive, and preserving the spirit and letter of Indiana's 317 Plan, which formed the foundation for the many changes already taking place across the state.

Spending for home and community-based services in Indiana grew 80 percent from 2000 to 2004. ■■■■■■



Political participation gap narrows

Exercising the right to vote is at the very core of a democratic society. The people we choose to represent us write laws that govern everything we hold dear.

For many years, people with disabilities have been denied full participation in the electoral process. In Indiana, however, that political participation gap is narrowing. The state has made great strides toward implementing the provisions of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), which requires that polling places be accessible and guarantees all citizens the right to cast a secret ballot. Those provisions will remove many of the barriers that previously prevented people with disabilities from voting.

While casting a ballot on Election Day is one of our most important responsibilities as citizens, the definition of political participation means much more. It means volunteering at the polls and for political campaigns, registering others to vote and even running for office. The Council is encouraging people with disabilities to participate in such activities through its Count Us IN initiative (see page 9). Through these efforts, people with disabilities are becoming a powerful political force throughout the state.

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2000 General Election Voter Turnout

POTENTIAL VOTERS	PERCENT OF PARTICIPATION
People with disabilities	41%
People without disabilities	51%

Source: National Organization on Disability

Remembering: Justin Dart



Remembering: Costa Miller

“I die in the beautiful belief that the revolution of empowerment will go on.”

In 2002, the disability community lost a legendary leader, Justin Dart. The “father of the ADA” and “godfather of disability rights” died at 71 after decades of tireless advocacy. People with disabilities today owe many of their civil rights and freedoms to his efforts and the efforts of those he inspired.

Dart became an advocate after he contracted polio in 1948 and began using a wheelchair. He was best known for promoting civil rights legislation for people with disabilities – what eventually became the Americans with Disabilities Act. When Congress was considering the legislation, Dart visited every congressional office, wearing his trademark “ADA” cowboy hat, to explain the necessity of the legislation. When President George H.W. Bush signed the ADA into law in 1990, Dart was with him on the platform.

Before and after the passage of the ADA, Dart toured the nation to promote disability rights and served on many state and national disability committees. Seeing a growing backlash against disability rights in the mid-1990s, he dedicated himself to being a “full-time citizen soldier in the trenches of justice,” advocating for disability rights all over the world.

Dart’s final statement to the disability community was: “I call for solidarity among all who love justice, all who love life, to create a revolution that will empower every single human being to govern his or her life, to govern the society and to be fully productive for self and for all. ... I die in the beautiful belief that the revolution of empowerment will go on. ... I’m with you always. Lead on! Lead on!”

In 2004, Indiana residents with and without disabilities mourned the loss of Costa Miller, a servant leader who was passionate about inclusion for people with disabilities.

“Costa was a true visionary,” said Suellen Jackson-Boner, Council executive director. “His leadership as chairman of the Council’s board elevated the agency and raised the bar for performance. All of us who worked with Costa will be forever grateful.”

Miller was the only executive director in the 30-year history of the Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (INARF). In addition, he served for four

years as chair of the Council’s board of directors, was vice-chair of the President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, and was past chair of both COVOH and the Indianapolis Resource Center for Independent Living. He received the Sagamore of the Wabash from four Indiana governors.

Disability advocate Ric Edwards said, “The best way we can honor such a man is to take up his work. We have been presented a significant legacy. We cannot – we must not – let it die. I for one would not want to face Costa should we fail.”

“The best way we can honor such a man is to take up his work. We have been presented a significant legacy. We cannot – we must not – let it die.”

Disability advocate Ric Edwards

Moving forward: How the Council and its partners are transforming Indiana

By forging strong partnerships, the Council is building momentum in its quest to improve the lives of Hoosiers both with and without disabilities.

Working together

We build strong partnerships, promote communication, enhance education and disability awareness, and support innovative solutions to the problems faced by Hoosiers with disabilities.

As the Council works to create positive change, it has built alliances with a variety of organizations across the state. Those organizations include:

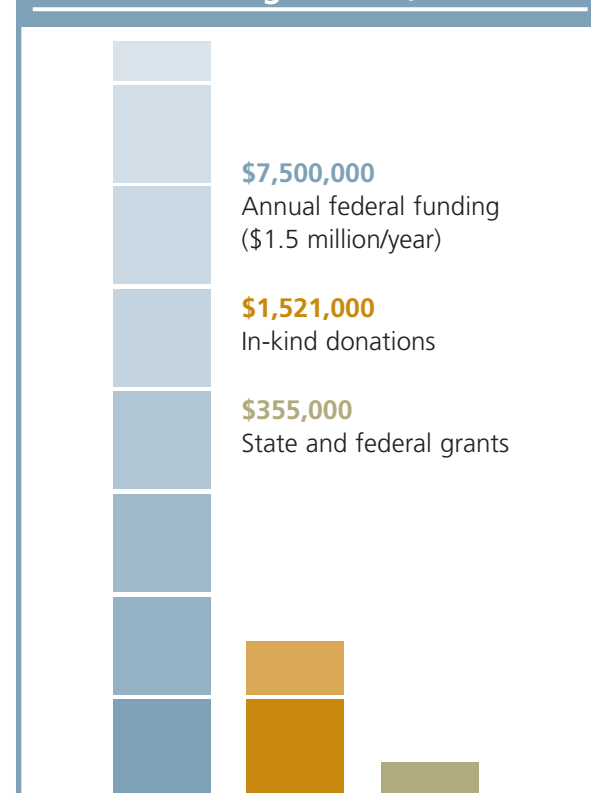
- Canterbury Hotel.
- Citizens Gas and Electric.
- COVOH.
- Independent Living Centers.
- Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities.
- Indiana Civil Rights Commission.
- Indiana Family and Social Services Administration.
- Indiana Housing Finance Authority.
- Indiana Institute on Disability and Community.
- Indiana Parent Information Network.
- Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services.
- Indiana Secretary of State.
- Indianapolis Arts Council.
- Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.
- Mental Health Association.
- O'Malia's Supermarkets.
- SBC Indiana.
- Self-advocates of Indiana.
- The Arc of Indiana.
- United Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Indiana.
- Westin Hotel, downtown Indianapolis.
- Yellow Cab.
- Many other businesses, state agencies, commissions and councils.

These partnerships encourage the sharing of resources, reduce duplication and enhance the level of "customer service" provided to people with disabilities.

Bringing home federal dollars

The Council has also built momentum by maximizing in-kind contributions and drawing dollars from federal funding sources and grants whenever possible. We work hard to ensure that Hoosiers with disabilities receive the maximum benefit from these additional funds, which make possible the many powerful, innovative programs we offer to Hoosiers statewide.

Council funding sources, 2000-2004

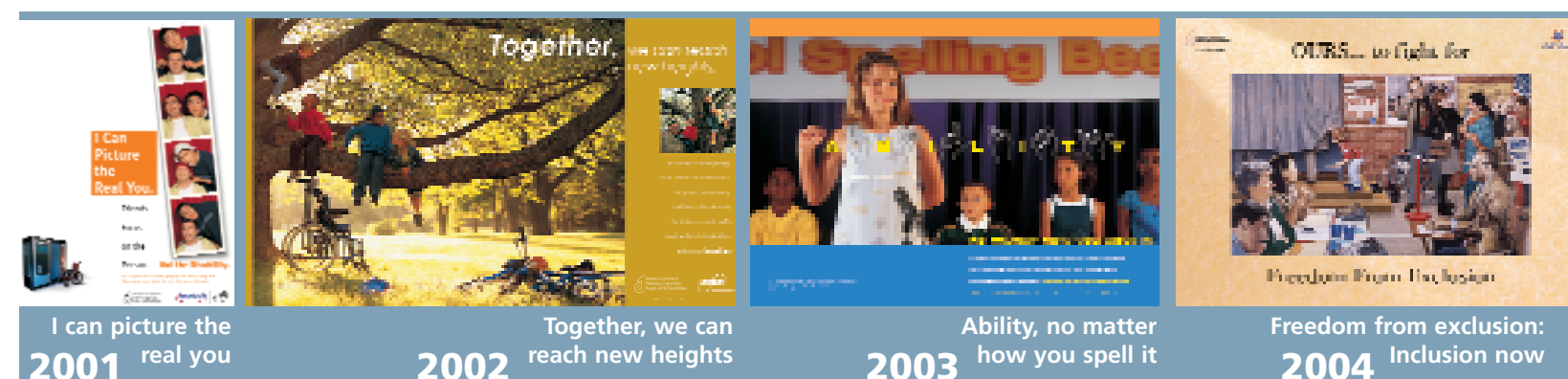


Disability Awareness Month

The month of March has become the catalyst for community participation throughout the state. During the annual Disability Awareness Month campaign, hundreds of communities organize awareness events and activities in schools, businesses, libraries, places of worship, government buildings and more.

"It was a neat experience," Cunningham said. "The children really seemed to enjoy the stories."

The Disability Awareness Month campaign has consistently been honored for its effectiveness and creativity by both the Public Relations Society of America and the International Association of Business Communicators. In fact, in one recent



From 2000 to 2004, Disability Awareness Month created an estimated 71 million impressions and involved more than 100,000 Hoosiers in grassroots activities and events. The effectiveness of the campaign continues to grow, each year reaching more and more Hoosiers, particularly children, with the disability awareness message.

Hoosiers' attitudes about disability are changing, and the Council contributes by offering a wide variety of Disability Awareness Month materials to Indiana residents. Each year, the Council provides theme-specific materials, such as posters, bookmarks and stickers, free of charge. The Council also offers free activity guides to help Indiana residents implement local Disability Awareness Month activities.

For example, using one of the Council's activity packets, the community of Lawrenceburg celebrated Disability Awareness Month 2004 with a Mayor's Story Hour at the local library. Mayor William Cunningham read stories to children from this community of fewer than 5,000 residents, then allowed time for interaction and questions related to disability.

awards competition, the Disability Awareness Month campaign was awarded a perfect score.

As part of Disability Awareness Month, the Council annually partners with United Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Indiana to sponsor an essay contest for Indiana children. Since the contest's inception in 1996, 160 elementary and middle schools have participated, submitting more than 3,500 essays based on the annual "attitude" theme. The contest encourages classroom dialogue about disability issues and prompts Indiana students to examine their attitudes about people with disabilities.

"[The library story hour] was a neat experience. The children really seemed to enjoy the stories."

Lawrenceburg Mayor William Cunningham

Annual Conference for People with Disabilities

Each year, hundreds of members of Indiana's disability community gather for the Council's Annual Conference for People with Disabilities. This unique symposium offers workshops and plenary sessions that explore innovative programs, challenge outdated concepts, build leadership skills, provide insight on current events and encourage open debate on public policy.

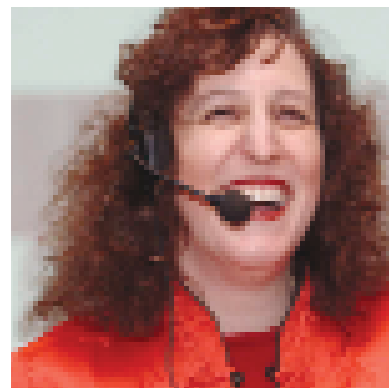
Since 2000, the Conference has welcomed a number of prominent national speakers, who bring new ideas and energy to Indiana's disability community. These speakers included:

- Marca Bristo, president and chief executive officer of Access Living and former chairperson of the National Council on Disability.
- Jim Dickson, vice president of governmental affairs for the American Association of People with Disabilities.
- John Hockenberry, an Emmy Award-winning correspondent for "Dateline."

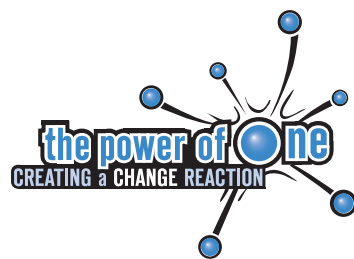
- Bob Kafka, national organizer of ADAPT.
- Bobby Silverstein, director of the Center for the Study and Advancement of Disability Policy at George Washington University Medical Center.
- Rachel Simon, author of *Riding the Bus with My Sister*, a memoir about growing up with a sister with a disability.
- Alana Yvonne Wallace, founder and artistic director of Dance>Detour, Chicago's first mixed-abilities dance company.

Consumer Investment Fund

The Consumer Investment Fund (CIF) is driven by the concept of return on investment. CIF is a scholarship program for people with disabilities and their family members, who use the funds to attend workshops and training events. Recipients — more than 900 people since 2000 — use their new knowledge and skills to give back to the community. In 2003 alone, scholarship recipients contributed 1,050 hours of community service.



2001



2002



2003



2004

Self-advocates of Indiana

Through Self-advocates of Indiana, the Council is building leaders and empowering talented Indiana residents to solve problems in their own communities. This organization equips people with developmental disabilities with the knowledge and skills needed to assist one another and educate community leaders.

Since 2000, Self-advocates has expanded into many new regions of the state, reaching more people with disabilities than ever before.

Award for Excellence in Reporting on Disability Issues

The Indiana news media play a critical role in shaping communities' attitudes and opinions about people with disabilities. To promote the use of "people first" language and develop an understanding among reporters about disability issues, the Council annually presents Awards for Excellence in Reporting on Disability Issues. The awards, in both print and broadcast categories, honor in-depth feature stories or series about types of disability or disability issues. Recent winners have come from such communities as Portage, Munster, Indianapolis, Fort Wayne and Bloomington.

Count Us IN

Count Us IN was founded in 2001 to increase the political participation of citizens with disabilities in Indiana. Since then, Count Us IN volunteers have surveyed thousands of polling places across the state to identify accessibility concerns and have worked with local officials to develop cost-effective solutions. Others have served as poll workers or joined local voting advisory panels.

The success of this initiative lies in its strong partnerships with the Indiana Secretary of State's Office, Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services, county clerks and commissioners, ADA Indiana, mayors' advisory councils, and numerous volunteers from the disability community and beyond.

"We all want the same thing – fully accessible polls," said Secretary of State Todd Rokita. "The partnership has put us in a position to make great strides toward the goal."

The influence of Count Us IN has gone beyond polling place accessibility. Count Us IN volunteers, in working with poll workers and election officials, have proved that people with disabilities can be active, contributing members of the political process.

"We all want the same thing – fully accessible polls. The partnership has put us in a position to make great strides toward that goal." ■■■■■

Indiana Secretary of State Todd Rokita



Working at the polls

On Election Day and throughout the year, Count Us IN volunteers survey their local polling places to evaluate accessibility. Mike and Edelle Rothrock (above) evaluated more than 60 sites in Bartholomew County during a recent election season, finding that many fell short of providing

equal access to all voters. This ramp, for example, is 50 percent too steep for a wheelchair to navigate safely. Using such results as evidence, Count Us IN works with local election officials to make accessibility improvements or to choose more accessible polling locations.

Community Transportation Initiative

The lack of accessible, reliable transportation is a major concern for Hoosiers with disabilities, especially those who live in rural areas of the state. To address this issue, the Council in 2000 created the Community Transportation Initiative, which brings together decision-makers from local communities and helps those community leaders create transportation plans that benefit people both with and without disabilities. The initiative has provided

leadership and transportation planning skills to more than 57 people from 34 Indiana counties.

In October 2003, transportation experts from across the nation, including Michelle Aulthouse of Disability Link in Georgia (above left), convened in Indianapolis for the Council's "Accelerating Accessibility" conference, which focused on rural transportation needs for people with disabilities.

Partners in Policymaking

The Partners in Policymaking Academy is one of the most powerful, effective and intense advocacy training programs offered to people with disabilities and their family members. Participants learn about state-of-the-art concepts and emerging issues, as well as the basics of networking and public policy. They then develop plans to make changes in their own communities. Since 2000, 140 people have graduated from the program, joining the more than 500 people who have graduated since the program's inception in 1991.

Over the years, Partners in Policymaking graduates have launched dozens of effective, meaningful programs and organizations:

- Partner graduate Cris Fulford established ATAIN, which provides assistive technology service and support to people with disabilities statewide.
- Parent advocate Sheri Caveda, a Partner graduate, founded Fort Wayne's United Voice and launched Fifth Freedom, a statewide network of people with disabilities and disability-related organizations that works to create inclusive communities.

- Partner graduate Patricia Stewart was involved in founding the Assistive Technology Training and Information Center (ATTIC) in Vincennes.
- Self-advocates Betty Williams and Darcus Nims, both Partners in Policymaking graduates, founded Self-advocates of Indiana, which gives people with disabilities the information and training they need to be successful agents of change in their communities.
- Partner graduate Brenda Berry established the Parent Information Distribution Center in Gary to support parents and families of children with disabilities in Lake County.
- Partner graduate Chris Delnat helped to create the Wabash Independent Living and Learning Center in Terre Haute.

There are many more outstanding examples of Partner graduates' involvement in disability-related organizations and causes across the state. As we work to improve the lives of Indiana residents with disabilities, the Partners in Policymaking Academy is a central component of grassroots leadership.



Fifth Freedom

In a famous speech during the 1940s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt outlined four freedoms guaranteed to all Americans: freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from fear and want. Fifth Freedom, an Indiana organization supported by the Council, was founded in 2001 on the premise that people with disabilities need a fifth guarantee of freedom – freedom from exclusion – before they can participate fully in community life.

Fifth Freedom is a consumer-driven, cross-disability organization that serves as an agent of change in Indiana communities. Its chapters build alliances within their communities to support disability issues, conduct candidate and policy forums, and advocate for inclusion at the local and state levels. In addition, Fifth Freedom members have access to e-mail and telephone networks of statewide advocates, an annual statewide policy forum, community "town hall" meetings, a video training library and much more.

Members of the Fifth Freedom network use these resources to make real changes in their communities, and the Muncie chapter is a shining example. After joining the Fifth Freedom network in August 2003, Muncie's chapter created an agenda for change in its community. To implement that agenda, it participated in the Count Us IN polling place survey, coordinated both an issues forum and a candidate forum, and presented to the mayor a proposal to form a mayor's advisory council on disability. Members also arranged informal meetings



with legislators. In addition, the group supports two Advocacy Coordination Team leaders, who monitor state legislative activity and generate grassroots response to legislation of interest to people with disabilities.

"We would like to create a more inclusive community," said Dee Ann Hart, the Muncie Fifth Freedom coordinator. "We want consumers to be able to get out into the community. We'd like to see that people with disabilities will be able to live in their own homes, get to and from work and be gainfully employed."

The organization has been strengthened by such positive training opportunities as the Council's Partners in Policymaking Academy. In fact, 60 percent of the Muncie Fifth Freedom members are Partners graduates.

"Without the supports the Council has put in place for us to learn about advocacy and legislation, we probably would never have done these things," Hart said. "I can't really say how much I value these opportunities to be involved; I don't think I could measure it. But it's been a really good experience."

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Dee Ann Hart, Muncie Fifth Freedom coordinator

Partners in Policymaking: One mother transforms a community

A few years ago, Lourdes Hicks had reason to be angry. The Lake County resident's son, who has a disability, had been paddled by his teacher, and Hicks wanted answers. She got them, eventually, but she also learned something else along the way – the incredible, positive power of advocacy.

"All of the anger pushed me to do something positive," Hicks said.

To become a better advocate for her son, Hicks sought out a wide variety of training opportunities, including Partners in Policymaking, a Council-sponsored leadership training program. After she graduated, she volunteered for such Council-sponsored projects as Count Us IN and Fifth Freedom. Yet she also began to realize how badly other parents needed the kind of knowledge and support she had gained.

"I saw that other parents were in the dark. They didn't know their legal rights, how the system worked or what they were supposed to do," Hicks said. "I just wanted to share my knowledge with other people."

To do so, Hicks founded Parents Aiding Children and Adults (PACA). The organization provides valuable support and resources to parents of children with disabilities, including regular support groups and assistance with educational planning.

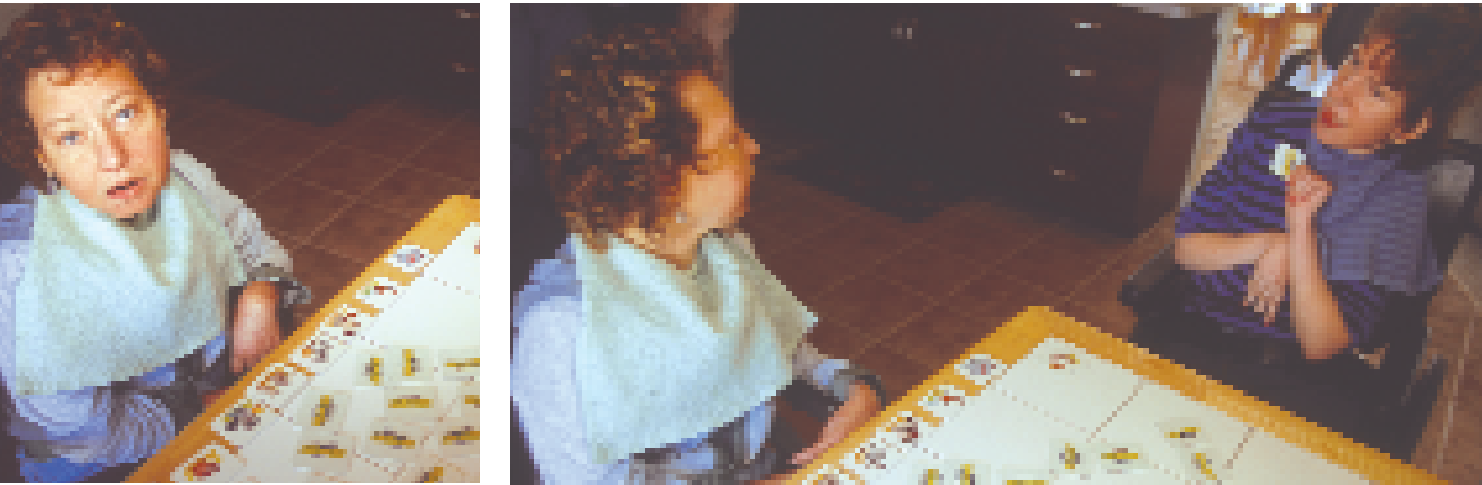
In September 2004, PACA sponsored a back-to-school festival featuring a balloon launch, music, giveaways, clowns, a magic show, demonstrations by police and fire departments, and much more. It gave Hicks the opportunity to interact with parents, answering questions about disability issues and distributing critical resources just in time for the new school year.



Although Hicks experienced many advocacy workshops and training programs, she credits Partners in Policymaking as the most valuable of those experiences.

"Just when you thought you had learned it all, Partners in Policymaking introduced you to something new," Hicks said. "I have enjoyed Partners more than anything I've ever been involved in, because you gather information and support, but you also make new friends – friends who mean something, who make you feel like family, who understand your pain. It encouraged me not to stop with children but to advocate for adults and people outside of Indiana, too."

Hicks' strong leadership, in her own community and beyond, is a shining example of the way Partners in Policymaking empowers Indiana leaders. The resources invested in Partners graduates filter through those leaders to every single Indiana community. Together, the more than 500 Indiana Partners graduates are enriching the lives of Hoosiers both with and without disabilities every day.



Back Home in Indiana Alliance

With support from the Indiana Housing Finance Authority and many other organizations, the Council launched the Back Home in Indiana Alliance in 1997 to help people with disabilities achieve the American dream of homeownership. Since then, more than 150 households have been served by the organization, which – through dozens of innovative partnerships – provides assistance with financing, home modification and more.

The new home of Amy Britt and Cindy Coers is a great example of how those partnerships benefit people with disabilities. Britt and Coers both have disabilities and use wheelchairs, but these lifelong friends now live in a home of their own – a home designed and built to meet the women’s specific needs.

“They’ve always had to live in apartments,” said Nancy Blanton, Coers’ mother. “With both of them in wheelchairs, they couldn’t even get around. They had to be carried from room to room. Now, they can go where they want – on the back porch in the evening, to the refrigerator, to the bathroom. To them, it’s living normally, like everyone else.”

It took careful planning and creative partnerships to help Britt and Coers achieve their dream of homeownership. Partners on the project included Rural Development, the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, the Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership, Gunstra Builders, the Indiana Housing Finance Authority, Fannie Mae, the Federal Home Loan Bank, Independent Residential Living of Central Indiana, Irwin Mortgage, and the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration.

Camilla Britt, Amy Britt’s mother, said owning a home has been life-changing for the two women. They haven’t stopped smiling since they moved in.

“There is hope for people with disabilities,” she said. “Just because they have a disability doesn’t stop them from having the same hopes and dreams as everyone else. And that’s what Amy and Cindy have achieved now.”

Transferring knowledge to empower Hoosiers

It would be impossible for the Council to address every disability-related issue in every Indiana community. That is why we equip Indiana residents with a variety of reference materials and publications focusing on such topics as “people first” language, the legislative process, public policy changes, and Medicaid home and community-based waivers. In addition, the Council produces the monthly *On Target* newsletter, which is delivered to 6,500 Indiana residents and contains disability-related news and features. By empowering Hoosiers with such information, we help them address their concerns as independently as possible.

In memory ■ Gov. Frank O’Bannon, 1930 – 2003

Gov. Frank O’Bannon’s leadership paved the way for many positive changes for Hoosiers with disabilities. During his time in office, Indiana closed the New Castle State Developmental Center, passed such legislation as the 317 Plan, M.E.D. Works and the Visitability Act, and improved home and community-based care options for people with disabilities.



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